

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Sara L. Hensley

**SUBJECT: CITY USE OF MEXICAN
HERITAGE PLAZA**

DATE: 05-26-05

Approved

/s/

Date

05/26/05

The purpose of this Manager's Budget Addendum is to provide additional information relative to City operations at the Mexican Heritage Plaza (MHP).

Contract Provisions

Last summer, the City executed a first amendment to the loan agreement with the Mexican Heritage Corporation (MHC). This amendment reduced the installment payments due from MHC to the City by an amount equal to the approximate fair market value of the City's use of space at the Mexican Heritage Plaza for the Neighborhood Development Center activities. (\$1,440 per month, not to exceed \$17,800 per year)

Section 10 of that agreement states that:

"City shall establish a Strong Neighborhoods Initiative (SNI) Neighborhood Office in an area of the Cultural Center which shall be known as the "booking office". City also intends to provide services of the City's Neighborhood Development Center ("NDC") in classroom known as the computer lab and such other portions of the Cultural Center."

Hours of Operation

Classroom

The NDC has used the facility primarily as a training and community meeting space. The NDC's Spanish-Language Community Leadership Academy has been held on Thursday nights, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. To date, 11 classes have been held in the classroom space with a total of 51 participants.

To maximize utilization of this space for the community, the NDC has also partnered with 5 groups (the Plata Arroyo Neighborhood Association, the San Antonio Unidos Neighborhood Association, the Gateway East Neighborhood Advisory Group and the Grail) in providing access to the classroom space for their monthly meetings. For the period August through May 2005, 115 people have participated in 42 meetings for a total of 888 participant hours.

Booking Area

An office for SNI staff was established in the booking area. Due to health-related staffing issues, maintaining an on-going presence at the Plaza has been challenge. However, effective April 4 2005, staff has been re-assigned and a new schedule has been put into place. The current schedule is as follows:

Day	Hours
Monday	9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Tuesday	9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Wednesday	9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Thursday	9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Friday	9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

SNI staff will also be available at the Plaza on the evenings of Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC) meetings: Every Tuesday of the month, the third Monday of every Month and the fourth Thursday of every month. SNI has allocated a half-time Development Officer and a full-time Community Activity Worker to staff the Office. The staff provides front counter information, resources and referrals on a drop-in basis. To the extent possible, at least one person will be in the office to provide assistance. In those instances when staff will be required to be in the field, appropriate signage will be posted indicating the time staff will return and providing an alternative number to call for assistance.

Negotiations with MHC

As the City Council is aware, the MHC has experienced significant challenges in its attempts to secure program funding. Last fall, Marcela Aviles-Davidson was hired as the new director and given the charge to reinvigorate the organization. The Director has established a new vision for the Plaza as the “Latino Lincoln Center”. In an effort to ensure common vision and compatibility of services, MHC and City staff have met on several occasions to discuss service expectations and desired outcomes. One outcome that has been discussed is a proposed expansion of facility use to allow for the relocation of some NDC staff to the Plaza. The Director has expressed a strong desire to work with the City but has requested additional discussions take place prior to any expansion of services. These discussions are on going.

CONCLUSION

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services and the Strong Neighborhood Initiative are committed to working with MHC to provide training and access to services at the Plaza. By working together, we believe that we can provide access to quality services and help build the community support necessary to realize the new vision of the Plaza.

/s/

SARA L. HENSLEY
Director of Department of Parks, Recreation
and Neighborhood Services